

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace paragraph [0001] with the following amended paragraph:

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of an earlier application entitled "PLUG-DROPPING CONTAINER FOR RELEASING A PLUG INTO A WELLBORE." That application was filed on January 21, 2002, and has U.S. Serial No. 10/066,460, now U.S. Patent No. 6,672,384. The parent application is incorporated herein in its entirety by reference.

Please replace paragraph [0036] in the filed application with the following amended paragraph:

[0036] FIG. 2B is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of the prior art valve of FIG. 2A, with the view taken across line I-I ~~B-B~~ of FIG. 2A.

Please replace paragraph [0043] in the filed application with the following amended paragraph:

[0043] FIG. 5E is a side, cross-sectional view of the plug-retaining valve of FIG. 5B. The cut is taken across line II-II ~~E-E~~ of FIG. 5D.

Please replace paragraph [0044] in the filed application with the following amended paragraph:

[0044] FIG. 5F represents another cross-sectional view of the plug-retaining valve of FIG. 5B. The cut is taken across line III-III ~~F-F~~ of FIG. 5D.

Please replace paragraph [0051] in the filed application with the following amended paragraph:

[0051] FIG. 9B presents a transverse view of the plug-dropping container of FIG. 9A. The view is taken through line IV-IV ~~B-B~~ of FIG. 9A. Visible in this view is the flapper, and a shaft for rotating the flapper.

Please replace paragraph [0053] in the filed application with the following amended paragraph:

[0053] FIG. 9D provides a cross-sectional view of the plug-dropping container of FIG. 9C, with the view taken through line V-V ~~D-D~~ of FIG. 9C. It can be more clearly seen that the flapper has been rotated from its plug-retained position against the seat to its plug-released position covering the bypass opening.

Please replace paragraph [0055] in the filed application with the following amended paragraph:

[0055] FIG. 10B presents a transverse view of the plug-dropping container of FIG. 10A. The view is taken through line VI-VI ~~B-B~~ of FIG. 10A. Visible in this view is the plate, and a shaft and gear for moving the plate horizontally.

Please replace paragraph [0057] in the filed application with the following amended paragraph:

[0057] FIG. 10D provides a cross-sectional view of the plug-dropping container of FIG. 10C, with the view taken through line VII-VII D-D of FIG. 10C. It can be more clearly seen that the plate has been translated from its plug-retained position to its plug-released position.

Please replace paragraph [0072] in the filed application with the following amended paragraph:

[0072] The plug-retaining valve 340 is designed to be rotated between plug-retained and plug-released positions. To accomplish this rotation, shafts 347 project from opposing sides of the valve 340. The shafts 347 are perpendicular to the fluid channel 342. The shafts 347 extend through the wall of the cementing head 10 for turning the plug-retaining valve 340. The shaft 347 may be rotated manually. Alternatively, rotation may be power driven by a drive member 358, or may be remotely operated by a suitable motor or drive means (not shown). It is preferred that the shafts extend on opposite sides of the cementing head 10 for pressure balancing. By turning the shaft 347, an operator may rotate the plug-retaining valve 340 between plug-retained and plug-released positions. It is understood that any arrangement for rotating the plug-retaining valve 340 is within the scope of the present invention.

Please replace paragraph [0090] in the filed application with the following amended paragraph:

[0090] FIG. 9A is a cross-sectional view of still another embodiment of a plug-dropping container 400 of the present invention. In this arrangement, the plug-retaining

device 440 is a flapper valve. Here, the valve 440 is in its closed position, preventing the downward release of the dart 80. The canister 430 is centralized within a tubular housing 420 by a spacer 434 (centralizer) and an annulus 422 is formed between the canister 430 and the housing 420. The canister 430 extends downward below the valve 440. An upper bypass port 436 is formed in the canister 430 and a [[A]] lower bypass port 428 is milled into the canister 430 below the valve 440. The valve 440 preferably contains a curved flapper 444, having an outer diameter that is dimensioned to match the canister's 430 inner diameter. The flapper 444 mates with a seat 442. The seat 442 is formed in the canister 430 and serves as the channel for the valve 440.

Please replace paragraph [0094] in the filed application with the following amended paragraph:

[0094] FIG. 10A is a cross-sectional view of yet another embodiment of a plug-dropping container 500 of the present invention. In this arrangement, the plug-retaining device 540 is a horizontal plate. Here, the plate 540 is in its closed position, preventing the downward release of the dart 80. Similar to other embodiments, a canister 530 is centralized within a tubular housing 520 by a spacer 534 (centralizer).

Please replace the Abstract with the following new Abstract:

[00100] ~~The present invention relates to a~~ A plug-dropping container used for releasing plugs or other objects into a wellbore during fluid circulation procedures. In one aspect, the plug-dropping container is used as part of a cementing head. The plug-dropping container comprises an elongated housing, and a canister disposed co-axially within the housing. The canister is configured to receive the plug, such as a drill pipe dart. A valve is disposed below the canister. The valve is movable from a plug-retained position where the plug is blocked, to a plug-released position where the plug may be released into the wellbore there below. In the plug-retained position, fluid is permitted to flow through the canister-housing annulus and around the valve.